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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 KABUL 003506

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/03/2019  
TAGS: PGOV PREL AF  
SUBJECT: THE MORNING AFTER: THE KARZAI CAMP LOOKS AHEAD

Classified By: PolCouns Annie Pforzheimer reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶11. (S) Summary: At a meeting with Ambassador Eikenberry November 3, the day after being declared the winner of the presidential elections, President Karzai appeared ready to get to work on his second term, buoyed by the call from President Obama. He accepted the need for forward momentum: his inauguration speech with the announcement of his compact with the Afghan people, the selection of competent Ministers in key positions, and a possible International Conference in Kabul some months from now that would ratify and implement the compact. Karzai held a press conference later the same morning at which he promised to address corruption and "clean this stain from our garments." Separately, six key cabinet ministers made similar affirmations to Ambassador Ricciardone and other members of the International Community (IC). They also asked us to influence Abdullah to concede clearly and soon. End Summary

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KARZAI LOOKS FORWARD  
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¶12. (S) Ambassador Eikenberry met with President Karzai on the morning of November 3. Karzai expressed appreciation for President Obama's "good" phone call. Karzai said he understood the need for, and was ready to move ahead with, an inaugural speech announcing his compact with the Afghan people. The Ambassador underscored the importance and significance of a timely announcement of clean and competent Ministers in key positions. Karzai agreed, and said he would move forward with this. (Note: Press reports of General Dostum arriving in Afghanistan looking for a payoff for his election support indicate the difficult political task ahead of Karzai. End Note.) Ambassador Eikenberry gave five themes for the way forward: 1) partnership, 2) common goals, 3) determination, 4) urgency, and 5) steady commitment. Karzai said he agreed and would use these themes at his press conference.

¶13. (U) A few hours later, President Karzai held a press conference where he accepted the IEC's decision as legal and constitutional. He said the Afghan people were the real winner in the electoral process, and thanked the ANSF, ISAF, the UN, and the IC for their sacrifice. He said the new Afghan government would be a national unity government, and that the "door is open to everyone." However, he said that this unity meant he "had no opposition and did not need any." He affirmed that the Afghan government will have a strong partnership with the IC, especially the U.S., but that "further clarification of our relationship is needed in regards to assistance." He acknowledged that Afghanistan has problems with corruption, but was now ready to "clean this stain from our garments."

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KARZAI'S TEAM BRAINSTORMS WAYS TO LIMIT CORRUPTION  
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¶4. (C) French Ambassador Jean de Ponton d'Amecourt organized a morning after breakfast to brainstorm on the post-election plan of action with six key Afghan Ministers: Interior Minister Atmar, Finance Minister Zakhilwal, Education Minister Wardak, Commerce Minister Sharani, Agricultural Minister Rahimi, and IDLG Minister Popal. Ambassador Ricciardone, EU Representative Sequi, British Charge Tom Dodd, and German Charge Christian Buck participated. The topics included corruption, rule of law, and better governance.

¶5. (C) The French Ambassador opened the meeting with a review of the Paris Accords of June 2008, that called for joint audits to limit corruption. The Afghans and IC agreed that addressing corruption and rule of law must be key priorities in the next five years. The Ministers asked that the IC acknowledge the progress made on corruption, but admitted that Karzai's release of prisoners was hurting everyone's credibility, and that presidential leadership was essential -- Wardak undertook to take this message, in particular, "back to the President." They agreed with Ricciardone's suggestion to broaden the onus of granting amnesty away from the executive, or require some sort of additional approval, perhaps by Ministers or the Parliament.

¶6. (C) The French Ambassador also asked how the Afghan government could be better organized to improve performance, noting the French Cabinet Secretariat as an example, not a suggestion. The Ministers thought that a strengthening of the role of the Office of Administrative Affairs (OAA) could be a solution. They explicitly recognized the need for a stronger anti-corruption mechanism than the current High

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Office of Oversight, and repeatedly enlisted the Paris Statement's call for "joint audits." There was no mention of establishing a CEO position.

¶7. (C) The Ministers also asked the IC for assistance in convincing Abdullah explicitly to accept the IEC decision and to concede gracefully. The IC representatives reported all were doing so, and confirmed that none of their governmental or organizational leaders had phoned messages to Abdullah, pending clarification of his acceptance of the IEC certification.

¶8. (C) Zakhilwal said that a good inaugural speech was important, and wanted to coordinate the input of the IC, noting that the U.S. had already provided some ideas to the first draft. The Ministers agreed that Karzai's choices of clear competent people for cabinet and governor positions was key. However, Atmar said that the "political reality" needed to be acknowledged by the IC, to include a dignified position for key Karzai-supporter Ismael Khan. Zakhilwal opined, however, that Khan no longer wants the Energy Ministry, since the "interesting part" was taken away (referring to the collection of utility payments to a private company); he thought Karzai would find some other way to accommodate him.

EIKENBERRY